Podcast towards Students' Listening Comprehension: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension remains a challenging skill for many English learners. This research investigates the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for developing listening skills in students. Using a SLR (Systematic Literature Review), this article analyzed three studies from 2018-2023 exploring the impact of podcasts on student listening comprehension. Findings reveal a significant improvement in listening skills across all studies, regardless of student levels or contexts. The researchers attributed this success to several factors: (1) authentic material, (2) diverse content, (3) active listening activities. Based on these findings, this article conclude that podcasts offer a valuable and engaging tool for improving listening comprehension in English language learning.

Introduction

Mastering English is imperative for students as it stands among the most crucial international languages. Writing, reading, and listening skills are essential for learning English. Mastering the skill of listening poses a significant challenge in the process of learning English. However, it is also one of the most important skills, as it is the foundation for speaking and writing. In order to speak and write English well, one must first understand English orally. According to Andrean et al. (2022), effective listening goes beyond simple comprehension and engages us in various ways: receiving the speaker's intent, constructing meaning, collaborating through dialogue, and ultimately,

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transforming ourselves through imaginative empathy.

As the most basic skill of the four main language development skills, listening must be learned by students from the beginning. Hastomo et al. (2024) states that listening is the first skill that students use when learning a language, especially spoken language, listening is considered the most basic talent. Additionally, instinctive hearing is used more often in the classroom than any other ability. Typically, our time is allocated to various language activities, with 45 percent dedicated to listening, 30 percent to speaking, 16 percent to reading, and 9 percent to writing (Slamet & Mukminatien, 2024). This distribution underscores the heightened importance of listening compared to other language skills.. This claim shows the high frequency of listening that can be applied in the classroom. can acquire knowledge efficiently.

Technology is currently developing rapidly, the sophistication of this technology has also resulted in many smart phones containing various kinds of sophisticated applications, one of which is being able to access podcasts (Oktarin & Hastomo, 2024). By involving technology as a tool in teaching listening, it helps teachers to make the learning process easier. According to Deiniatur and Cahyono (2024), the presence of smartphones really helps teachers in teaching listening.

Podcasts refer to digital audio files that are available for access through a variety of technologies, including cell phones, laptops, and computers (Bianchi-Pennington, 2018). Istiara et al. (2022) said that podcasts also have various languages, categories, levels. So, teachers can choose to use the right audio file based on the level of their students. By using technology as a tool in using podcasts in teaching, it can develop the quality of learning. as an online communication technology, podcasts provide motivational educational material secretly. podcast is also a great tool to use in teaching.

There are many different ways to improve English listening skills. One way is to listen to a variety of English materials. These materials can be tailored to the student's level of ability and interest. For example, beginners can start by listening to English songs, podcast or movies with subtitles. Once listening skills improve, students can move on to more complex materials, such as podcasts or conversations with foreigners. Podcasts serve as a convenient and efficient method for enhancing students' listening abilities. As indicated by Şendağ et al. (2018), podcasts are audio files that are uploaded online and can be downloaded onto mobile devices like cell phones, MP3 players, or iPods. Additionally, students have the option to directly listen to podcasts on their computers. Podcasts can help students improve their listening comprehension by introducing them to new vocabulary and helping them to understand how that vocabulary is used in context.

Method

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing research on podcasts and their impact on student listening comprehension, this article employed a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology (Hastomo & Zulianti, 2021). This article used a SLR, which meant carefully searching two key databases (Google Scholar and Neliti). These included core terms like "Listening Comprehension," "e-learning," and "Podcast," alongside terms specific to our research focus, such as "audio-based

instruction" and "mobile learning platforms." Furthermore, this article implemented strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to further refine the search results and guarantee the retrieved studies directly addressed our research objectives. This rigorous approach ensures a solid foundation for our analysis, laying the foundation for a reliable and comprehensive examination of the current research landscape in this field.

This current study employs specific criteria to determine which studies will be reviewed, based on search results from Google Scholar and Neliti. The studies considered must fall within the period from 2018 to 2023 and specifically investigate the use of podcasts for developing listening comprehension skills. Additionally, all selected sources must be accessible through open-access and verified sites on Google Scholar and Neliti, ensuring their reliability and ease of retrieval.

Choosing studies from 2018-2023 ensures that this article reviews the most recent research, reflecting the latest developments and trends in the field. Focusing on studies that specifically investigate the use of podcasts to develop listening comprehension skills narrows the researcher's scope and ensures the exclusion of irrelevant research. Limiting sources to open-access and verified sites on Google Scholar and Neliti guarantees that researchers can easily access and retrieve the full text of the studies.

Three articles were excluded from this study. The first exclusion pertained to "Promoting Learner Autonomy in Learning English Listening Skills through Mobile-Assisted Applications" (Nguyen, 2023), as it delves into mobile-assisted applications in a general context rather than specifically focusing on podcasts. The second excluded article, "The Role of Metacognitive Listening Strategies Awareness and Podcast-Use Readiness in Using Podcasting for Learning English as a Foreign Language" (Rahimi & Katal, 2012), was discounted due to its emphasis on learners' internal factors, investigating the role of metacognitive strategies and readiness in podcast utilization. Additionally, this article was published in 2012, which falls outside the specified date range. Lastly, "Effects of Podcast-Making on College Students' English Speaking Skills in Higher Education" (Yeh et al., 2021), was excluded from consideration. Despite exploring the impact of podcast-making on speaking skills in higher education, this article did not directly relate to listening comprehension and was also unavailable through open access.

Three remaining articles have been identified as pertinent to this research. The initial study, conducted by (Abdulrahman et al., 2018), was selected due to its examination of the impact of podcasts on the listening comprehension of English as a Foreign Language students, with a specific focus on the influence of podcasts on students' listening comprehension. The subsequent research, authored by Aditya (2018), investigates the effects of podcasts on the listening comprehension of undergraduate English students, revealing a notable enhancement in comprehension following the incorporation of podcasts in the learning process. The third study, presented by Partiwi (2022), delves into the influence of podcasts on the listening comprehension of Indonesian junior high school students. The findings from this study indicate that podcasts not only contribute to improved comprehension but also facilitate vocabulary acquisition and foster motivation for learning English.

Results and Discussion

A. Effectiveness of Podcasts

A podcast is a digitally stored audio file that can be downloaded and played at the listener's convenience. Usually formatted as MP3 files, podcasts are accessible on various platforms such as computers, smartphones, and tablets. They encompass a diverse range of content, spanning from news, stories, and music to educational material. Podcasts provide listeners with unrestricted access to a broad array of audio content, allowing customization based on individual preferences (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). The internet is teeming with a multitude of podcast offerings, including repurposed television and radio programs, educational lectures, and independent or collaborative efforts by passionate creators (Aditya, 2018). Podcasting is an emerging digital technology that has become a valuable tool for education in recent years (Partiwi, 2022)

In listening comprehension, podcasts can have a positive impact on both vocabulary development and listening skills. Vocabulary development can occur because podcasts present a variety of vocabulary in engaging and relevant contexts, helping students understand the meaning of the vocabulary they hear. Additionally, podcasts can help students develop their understanding of grammar and sentence structure. Listening skills can improve because podcasts present authentic language materials, helping students become familiar with different accents and intonations. Furthermore, podcasts can help students develop active listening skills, such as summarizing, identifying important information, and responding to what they hear.

Based on the three journals mentioned, podcasts can be an effective learning medium to improve students' listening skills. Research by Partiwi (2022), who implemented podcasts as a listening learning medium for class 7 students of SMK 4 Metro, showed that podcasts can positively affect the listening skills of students, as evidenced by the increase in scores on the tests conducted. Similarly, research conducted by Aditya (2018) demonstrated that podcasts can improve the listening skills of students at STKIP PGRI Bangkalan compared to their skills before using podcasts as a learning tool. The third study by Abdulrahman et al. (2018) also showed an improvement in listening skills among students of SMA Angkasa 2 who had undergone listening learning treatment using English podcasts.

Factors Contributing to Listening Skills

Authentic materials provided by podcasts offer students a rich learning experience in language learning. Students are exposed to natural English spoken by native speakers in various contexts, which mimics real-world language use and provides a richer learning experience compared to traditional classroom materials. This immersive and engaging nature of podcasts allows students to focus more on listening (Aditya, 2018).

Podcasts offer diverse content and formats that cater to different interests and learning styles, making the listening experience more engaging and motivating.

Educational podcasts provide engaging avenues for acquiring knowledge in various subjects, from history and science to current events and business. This enables students not only to enhance their listening proficiency but also to expand their comprehension of the surrounding world, transforming the learning process into a multifaceted and enriching experience (Partiwi, 2022)

In addition to diverse content, podcasts incorporate active listening activities that help students understand the story and flow of the podcast. These activities include vocabulary identification, comprehension tasks, and discussions based on the podcasts, promoting active listening and deeper understanding. These activities move students beyond passive consumption of audio toward a more engaged and interactive learning experience. Students become participants in the storytelling, constructing meaning and making connections with their own knowledge and experiences. This active involvement leads to a more robust and holistic understanding of the podcast's content, fostering not just comprehension but also critical thinking and communication skills (Abdulrahman et al., 2018).

Summary of Major Results

The examination of podcasts as an educational tool reveals their significant impact on language learning, particularly in the enhancement of listening comprehension skills. Defined as digital audio files, podcasts, recorded in MP3 format, can be accessed across diverse platforms. They offer a broad spectrum of content, ranging from news and stories to music and education. This adaptability, as noted by Abdulrahman et al. (2018), makes podcasts a customizable resource, providing users with full access to a variety of audio favorites.

Research findings consistently highlight the positive influence of podcasts on language acquisition. Notably, podcasts contribute to both vocabulary development and listening skills. By presenting diverse vocabulary in engaging contexts, podcasts facilitate a deeper understanding of word meanings. Additionally, podcasts aid in the comprehension of grammar and sentence structures. The exposure to authentic language materials within podcasts enhances listening skills, making students familiar with different accents and intonations. Moreover, podcasts foster active listening skills, such as summarization, identification of crucial information, and responsive engagement with the content.

Empirical evidence from three distinct studies validates the efficacy of podcasts in improving listening skills. Partiwi (2022) implemented podcasts for class 7 students, showcasing a noticeable enhancement in listening skills, as demonstrated by improved test scores. Aditya's (2018) study with students of STKIP PGRI Bangkalan echoed similar results, underlining the positive impact of podcasts on listening proficiency. Abdulrahman et al. (2018) reinforced these findings by illustrating improved listening skills among students of SMA Angkasa 2 who underwent listening learning treatment with English podcasts.

In addition to effectiveness, the analysis of factors contributing to listening studies underscores the educational value of podcasts. Authentic materials, diverse content, and active listening activities within podcasts provide students with a richer and more

interactive language learning experience. Exposure to natural English in various contexts, the presentation of diverse topics, and the incorporation of active listening tasks contribute not only to comprehension but also to critical thinking and communication skills. Podcasts emerge not just as a supplementary learning tool but as an innovative means to create an immersive and engaging language learning environment.

Drawbacks and Solutions

Despite the exciting potential of podcasts in enhancing English listening skills, several challenges need to be addressed. Limited access is a notable drawback, as not all students may have equal access to the necessary technology or internet connectivity required for podcast consumption. This digital divide could create disparities in learning opportunities, potentially excluding some students from benefiting fully. Moreover, passive listening tendencies pose a challenge, as students might treat podcasts as background noise rather than actively engaging with the content. This passive approach can limit the effectiveness of podcasts in promoting deep comprehension and active language learning.

Another concern is the potential for inappropriate content within podcasts. Given the vast and varied nature of podcast offerings, ensuring that content aligns with educational goals and is suitable for all students can be challenging. Inappropriate language, cultural insensitivity, or content misaligned with the curriculum could hinder the positive impact of podcasts on students' language learning experiences.

To overcome the challenge of limited access, educators can implement offline options for podcast consumption. Providing downloadable podcast episodes or distributing audio materials in alternative formats can ensure that students with limited internet access can still benefit from this learning tool. Additionally, incorporating engaging activities alongside podcast assignments can help combat passive listening tendencies. Tasks such as reflective essays, discussions, or collaborative projects that require active participation can transform passive listening into an interactive learning experience.

Curating selections is a crucial solution to the challenge of inappropriate content. Educators should proactively select and review podcast episodes to ensure alignment with educational objectives and cultural sensitivity. Creating a curated library of podcasts that meet specific language learning goals can guide students toward valuable and relevant content. Furthermore, accent familiarization strategies can address potential difficulties in understanding different accents and intonations within podcasts. Integrating accent-focused exercises or providing supplementary materials that familiarize students with diverse English accents can enhance their overall listening comprehension skills.

By acknowledging and actively addressing these challenges, educators can optimize the use of podcasts in the English language classroom. Implementing thoughtful solutions can transform podcasts from potential pitfalls into powerful tools, ensuring that all students can access and benefit from this dynamic approach to language learning.

Conclusion

In summary, the comprehensive examination of the research underscores the significant potential of podcasts as a valuable tool for enhancing student listening comprehension skills. The evidence presented in this paper illuminates the multifaceted benefits that podcasts offer, positioning them as a dynamic and engaging resource within language learning contexts. The studies reviewed consistently reveal that podcasts not only expose students to authentic materials but also provide diverse content, fostering active listening activities that contribute to the enhancement of vocabulary development, grammar understanding, and overall listening proficiency.

The versatility of podcasts becomes evident as they accommodate different interests and learning styles. This adaptability aligns with the diverse preferences of students, making podcasts a motivating and accessible alternative to traditional classroom materials. The findings emphasize that podcasts are not merely supplemental; they represent a compelling and innovative approach to language learning. As educators continually seek novel methods to enhance language acquisition, the integration of podcasts into teaching strategies emerges as a substantive consideration.

Moving forward, it is crucial for educators to recognize the transformative impact that podcasts can have on students' listening skills. The evidence presented in this research underscores the need to embrace podcasts as a powerful educational tool. By incorporating podcasts into language learning curricula, educators can create an environment that not only meets the academic needs of students but also inspires a genuine interest in the language, fostering effective listening skills development. In conclusion, the research advocates for the integration of podcasts as a cornerstone in the ongoing evolution of language education, recognizing their potential to revolutionize the way students engage with and comprehend spoken language.

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